

The advent of VRS has, after 20 years of marriage, proved the first technology which allows a break from my husband's dependence on me (hearing wife and certified interpreter) for his day to day communications with the world outside our home. When I first heard of VRS, I said "sounds to good to be true." After enrolling in the program, he and I were both thrilled when we learned what VRS opens up for him: he can set up his own appointments, make calls to extended family members and willingly initiate his own personal and business dealing contacts. We have owned a TTY all through the years, but telerelay services failed to allow free communication because of tedious salesman's jargon or call center phone option menus. Now instead of, "Can't you please call, it goes so much faster than relay?" or, "That store didn't understand me last time I tried...", all he says is "Sure, what's the number?"

I recently heard the FCC is trying to develop a new cost methodology system for VRS development. I plead with your agency to please hold off cost-cutting attempts until the infrastructure and procedures are quality proven and available 24/7. We have already encountered problems with increasingly grainy interface picture and at many times operators are not available or we experience long wait times.

All new technology must survive the initial costs of research and development before they become mainstream, then the costs always lower as the process is streamlined and better innovations continue to improve the market services and product.

Don't send us back into "Communication Dark Ages". It is imperative for equal access of the deaf community to both employment opportunities and as consumers in the retail market that you support this request.